

## DURHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

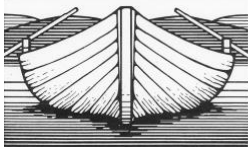
As President of the Durham Historical Society, I am pleased to report that the state of the society is strong. Some of the projects that were planned during the preceding year bore good fruit and new projects were both planned and completed this year.

In our ongoing efforts to refurbish the mill, we began looking at the state of the water wheel. Bringing in an expert, we established that it would cost about \$25,000 to sandblast and repaint the wheel. A contractor would be willing to do the job in four separate steps to reduce outlay of funds but even this was thought to be undoable, especially with funding through grants becoming more difficult. The condition of the wheel has further deteriorated with some of the buckets having rusted and become disconnected. Perhaps a replacement water wheel might be an option. In any case we decided to table such a project until we have had the opportunity to investigate further.

As far as refurbishing the mill in general is concerned, we recently engaged the services of Ian Stewart, an internationally known mill restorationist. After examining the structure, he commended the Society and the township, who in their partnership have done a good job in preservation. He said that when he had planned on coming to the mill, he foresaw that he would have to write a 40–50-page report on all that would have to be done. However, after actual examination, he thought he could cover everything in 2 or 3 pages.

We noticed that the steering oar on the Durham Boat needed repairs and it soon became evident that replacement rather than repairs should be conducted. Paul Rollins, a renowned wooden boat builder with a shop in York, Maine, was engaged to construct a new oar. Through a matching grant from PA250, we were able to not only finance the new oar but also to finance a project presenting new signage at the boat as well as throughout the mill, making it much easier to explain the history of the mill and the important figures involved with the area's history. Patrick Powers, of Hellertown, was hired to research and compose the signage verbiage. Mr. Powers has done a significant amount of research in the Boston area, concentrating on historical buildings of the pre-Revolutionary era. The offices of Representative Craig Staats and Senator Jarrett Coleman were instrumental in getting us the grant, and we wish to thank them for their assistance.

Another grant was received from the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation to finance a historical dig around the mill. Scheduling became difficult because the archaeologists firm was involved as expert witness in a court trial. Nevertheless, the dig was completed before year end as contracted. Preliminary findings indicated that the recovered root cellar was constructed in the mid 1800's and should be preserved. Other explorations took place along southern wall of the mill and at the site of the old, reconstructed archway. Previously, two digs were performed



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at the water wheel itself. Findings included parts of 18th century clay smoking pipes, metal hardware, old glass and pottery shards, etc. A complete report will be made early next year and an article for inclusion in a major archeological journal is being prepared.

The Society also contracted with a local researcher to determine who the original owners were of the plot of land containing the root cellar. His report is expected within the next few months.

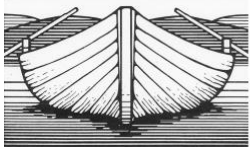
The Society presented several speakers to the general community during the summer months, and attendance averaged about 50 people per speaker. Dan Graham presented a program on the early iron industry in colonial Pennsylvania. Melanie Mayhew informed attendees about the numerous fishing weirs that were used by Native Americans. Michael Jesberger conducted an outstanding program on Hessian soldiers during the Revolutionary War. In addition to these speakers, we engaged speakers for the Founders' Day celebration that was held in the late summer. Clint Flack, from the Mercer Museum lectured on the Doan Gang, Sam Davis presented on George Washington, Rick Guth on George Taylor, and the Daughters of the American Revolution exhibited costumes depicting life during Revolutionary times. Speaking of Founders' Day, the Society sponsored the celebration of Durham's 250th anniversary. Although inclement weather impacted the number of attendees, the event was determined to be a success.

The Society conducted two road cleanups during the year, picking up trash along Durham Road from County Line to Rte. 212. This is our 30th year as PA Adopt-a-Highway participants.

A study was performed concerning the serious leaking issues through the wall of the mill. Severe deterioration of the pipe feeding the water wheel appears to be a part of the problem and we are studying possible solutions.

The acceptance of the resignation of one of our board members, Sarah Wuerstle, was made and her replacement, Jeff Clarke, was adopted as a member of the board. Jim Walter resigned as Vice President although he continues as a board member. In September the Society participated in the 3rd Passport to History event. This is an event sponsored by over 50 Historical Societies in the Lehigh Valley and allows lovers of history to view sites of historical importance. This year's attendance was average with about 45 people visiting our mill.

Considerable time was spent applying for grants to finance planned projects. In concert with the township, we applied for a grant to repair a wall of the mill suffering from a leakage issue. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in getting that grant. Despite that setback, we continue to look for other opportunities. We are currently focusing on another project, taking part in an Upper Bucks County celebration of the country's Semiquincentennial scheduled for May 2026 at Tinicum Park. We also have tentative plans for 5 speakers during the summer months.



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All in all, we plan to be quite busy. We thank the Township for its cooperation and collaboration in our efforts and we continue to do our best to support the sharing of the history of our special locale.

Respectfully submitted,

David Oleksa, President